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J. Bowring Delt. T. Prattent Sculp.

*History protecting Medals from the Ravages of Time*

Published by the Proprietor T. Prattent 60th Fear W. Smithfield London 1796

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# THE
# *Virtuoso's Companion*
# AND
# *COIN COLLECTORS GUIDE.*

VOL: 1.

London

*Publish'd for the Proprietor, by M. Denton,*

*Hospital Gate, West Smithfield.*

1795.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

# PREFACE.

THE great object of the Proprietor of this Work is to transmit to posterity, as national curiosities, accurate engravings of the great number of COPPER COINS which have lately appeared in circulation; such as tradesmen's tokens, colonial currency, *&c.* which, from the breaking of the dies, the limited numbers struck off, and various other circumstances, might otherwise be buried in oblivion. The Proprietor, moreover, flatters himself, that when the expence of collecting such a copious series, with that of the engraving and printing, is considered, the price will not be thought unreasonable. He trusts, therefore, to the encouragement of the public; intending to give an alphabetical list and fac-similies of FOUR HUNDRED and EIGHTY different Coins, in four Volumes twelves, with an elegant frontispiece and title pages, at the price of TWENTY SHILLINGS.

21x

# OBSERVATIONS ON COINS.

By *James Wright, Jun. Esq.* F.A.SS. *and Perth.*

I SHOULD be happy if a few observations that occur to me upon a subject that I know to be extremely interesting to many persons of taste throughout Britain, were deemed worthy of being diffused through the medium of your book on provincial coins; as they are humbly intended to promote improvement in a polite art, intimately connected with the *belles Letters*, and on which, the reputation of the present times for industry, ingenuity, and arts, must, in a great measure, depend at periods of the latest posterity.

Such of your readers as have not studied, or contracted a relish for the subject, may smile when they learn that I allude to the designs and execution of the most common current coins of the present day, known by the name of *provincial halfpence*; being issued by private traders for circulation, in Great Britain, chiefly since the year 1789; and which, in some districts, have almost totally supplanted the present very base and barbarous national copper currency. To those who are not aware of the importance of the *numismatic* study, I would recommend, as introductive to the knowledge in it, ADDISON's Essay; the Writings of FOLKES, DE CARDONNEL, and SNELLING; but especially the late excellent publication of the ingenious Mr. PINKERTON*. There are others, in whom the bare mention of the topick will excite the liveliest attention to my remarks.

Excepting the coins of the Romans, there has nothing occurred parralell to these, within so short a period, since during the æras of the ancient independent states of GREECE, when almost every city had its own distinct coinage, as is elegantly illustrated by the engravings and descriptions of Mr. COMBE ‡. Our modern coins of cities in Britain, excel the ancient in neatness of finish, from the use of the mill, and invention of indenting letters round the outer edge, as much as they fall short of them in the high relief and boldness of execution, in the representations which they bear; but in their great variety, and most cases, appropriate imagery, they approach the nearest to the merit of the Roman reverses,

* Essay on Coins and Medals, London, Edwards, 2 vols. 8vo. 1789.

‡ Num. veterum populorum et urbium. 4to. London, Cadell, 1782.

reverſes, of any thing that has appeared in the mintages of modern times.

It is, however, deeply to be regretted, by every lover of the fine arts, that ſo many of theſe pieces are degraded by puerile and contemptible deviſes: ſuch are all emblems of particular trades, or articles of dealing; mere aſſignations and ſign-poſts; and almoſt all morſels of heraldry, eſcutcheons, mottos, ſupporters, &c. Theſe can tranſmit no *thought*, no *information* to poſterity. The amazing durability of coins ſhould be ever remembered by thoſe who are concerned in iſſuing them; and ſuch deſigns adopted as may reflect the moſt ſtriking, and important features of the preſent times. Among ſeveral hundreds of differently deſigned pieces in my poſſeſſion, ſuch only as come under ſome of the five following deſcriptions ſeem to deſerve being ſignalized and recommended to imitation:

I. Such as have *fac ſimiles* of remarkable buildings; *e. g.* The *Canterbury* halfpenny, bearing the cathedral; the *York* one, with the noble minſter; reverſe, Clifford's tower: the Leeds cloth-hall appears upon one of the *Leeds* tokens; the weſt front of St Paul's church upon a *London* one; Ipſwich-croſs, a neat relique of ancient architecture, graces the *Ipſwich* halfpenny; as an old tower, a very entire remain of gothic labour, does that of *Dundee*; the venerable ruins of Bigod's caſtle in Suffolk is on that of *Bungay*; one of *Bedal*, in Yorkſhire, gives a ſtreet in perſpective, two inns, and a ſpire, &c. Theſe medals may exhibit to future times the forms of the ſtructures which they bear, long after their originals ſhall have faded and mouldered in the duſt:

"Ambition ſigh'd,—ſhe found it vain to truſt
"The faithleſs column, and the crumbling buſt;
"Huge moles, whoſe ſhadows ſtretch'd from ſhore to ſhore,
"Their ruins periſh'd, and their place no more;
"Convinc'd, ſhe now contracts her vaſt deſign——
"And all her triumphs ſhrink into a *coin*." POPE.

The Abbeys of Melroſe, Paiſley, St Andrews, Arbroath, &c. and the beſt modern buildings in Edinburgh and Glaſgow, would be deſirable objects for Scottiſh provincial pieces.

II. Others afford repreſentations of the great and uſeful undertakings of the preſent times; ſuch as the iron bridge over the Severn, on the *Colebrook-dale* halfpenny; reverſe, the

the inclined plane at Ketley: *Thames and Severn canal* piece, has a barge ſailing; reverſe, a maſſy aqueduct bridge: *Kent* halfpenny, on the union of Appledore, has a windmill, the miller, and his houſe; the great iron-works of *Wilkinſon* are differently pourtray'd on his currency. It is to be lamented, that among the few ſtruck for Scotland, not one comes under this deſcription. How ornamental and honourable would it be, for ſome of them to bear the figures, and perpetuate the dates of the erection of the greateſt foundery in the world at *Carron*; the north bridge at *Edinburgh*; the elegant bridges at *Perth* and *Glaſgow*; the great quay at *Aberdeen*; or the vaſt and uſeful aqueduct over the *Celvin*, ſupporting, at a ſtupendous elevation, one of the greateſt canals in Europe!

III. Striking emblems of that ſpirit of induſtry and commerce, which characterizes the preſent times, and eſpecially the Britiſh nation. One payable at *Ipſwich*, has "may God preſerve the plough and ſail;" a team in a field, and a ſhip in full ſail, coming into view behind a headland: a weaver is at work upon a *Haverill* coin; reverſe, a plough and ſhuttle: ſhips in full ſail are meet *inſignia* of the trade of *Liverpool*, *Yarmouth*, *Shields*, *Portſea*, and the *Cinque Ports*; as a ſheep, reverſe, a woolen weaver, is of the manufacture of *Rochdale*; and a hop-plantation of the beſt product of the county of *Suſſex*; the rapid and uſeful mail-coach, and exhibitions of whale-fiſhing, and hat-making, are ſeen upon different *London* pieces, &c.

IV. Illuſtrious characters and remarkable men, in Britiſh hiſtory have now their features tranſmitted to "diſtant climes and ages," upon common currency; which, perhaps, conveys "the charge of Fame*" better than expenſive medallions. NEWTON, SHAKESPEARE, JOHNSON, HOWARD, ROWE; and the founders, or greateſt benefactors of *Bath*, *Southampton*, *Lancaſter*, &c. are honoured upon pieces of general circulation; on this department, however, it muſt be obſerved with regret, that the portraits are, in general, far from being accurate; though, perhaps, not leſs ſo than the effigies of Roman Emperors, are given by the degenerate *intages* of the lower Empire; the ſcarce ones of which are collected with ſo much eagerneſs and expence, without regard to the contemptible or deteſtable characters of their proto-

* Pope.—Verſes to Addiſon on his Dialogues on Medals.

proto-types. Ours are not leſs worthy of being ſtyled the "Conciſum argentum in titulos, facieſque minutas†."

In this reſpect alſo, Scotland creeps at more than her uſual diſtance behind the Siſter Kingdom. Why are the features of Buchanan, Napier, the admirable Crichton, Hume, Robertſon, Cullen, and Reid, conſigned to the fugitve materials, and faithleſs charge of paper and canvas, and not a ſingle medal§ recording their likeneſſes to poſterity.

V. Some, laſtly, are merely curious; the engraver James has been very ſucceſsful in two landſcapes upon the oppoſite ſides of his *Dudley* token; and his elephant upon the *Pidcock* exhibition pieces, is at leaſt as well repreſented as the ſame animal is by old Roman artiſts, upon *denarii*, of the family *Cæcilia*, or upon thoſe of *Julius* and of *Auguſtus*.

I ſhall conclude this paper, with earneſtly ſoliciting the attention of all companies and individuals, who may henceforth be diſpoſed to employ the artiſts of Birmingham, London, &c. to fabricate coins for them, to the foregoing obſervations, which, I humbly flatter myſelf, will be approved by every perſon of taſte who has made the medallic art a ſtudy; and it is much to be wiſhed, that particular injuctions were given to the engravers, to have the figures on the piece much bolder and higher raiſed than is uſually done, which is effected by having them more deeply cut into the dye; and the dotted circle by which the figures on the field are protected, ſhould be much ſtronger, and more elevated; the ſhapes of even moſt of theſe pieces which I have commended, are two thin and broad; they ſhould be increaſed in thickneſs, even though their circumference ſhould be thereby diminiſhed. It may, perhaps, be objected, that theſe improvements will occaſion an additional expence, and conſequent reduction of profits of circulation; but it is to be conſidered, that even if leſs weight of copper were given in that form, the public would be no loſer, becauſe the pieces would be greatly leſs liable to wear by friction, than when almoſt the whole rough ſurface is expoſed to continual rubbing, as by the preſent ſtyle of inſipid *bas relief*. Let it be impreſſed upon the mind of every citizen, that this is a ſubject in which, as a great maſter§ of it as told us, "THE PERPETUAL GLORY OF THE NATION IS INTERESTED."

† Juvenal, in his Vth Satire.

§ Beſides the meed of merit given to diſtinguiſhed Engliſhmen on provincal coins, many elegant medals have been ſtruck of them.

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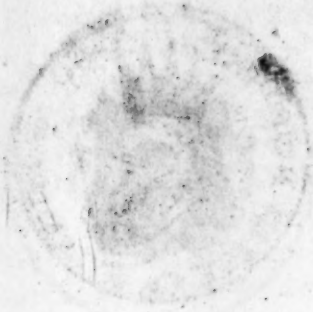

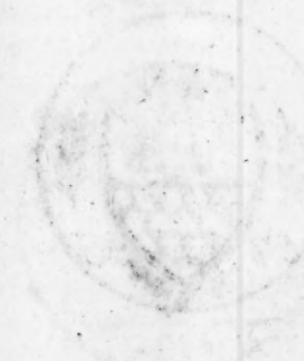
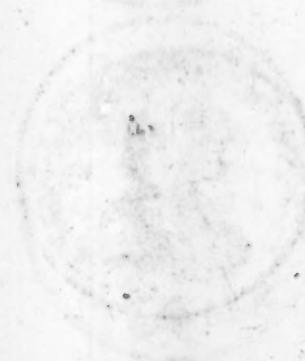

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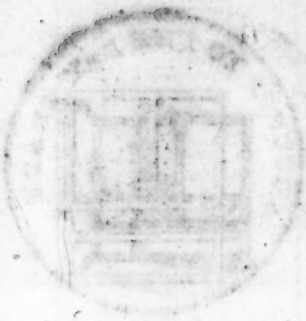
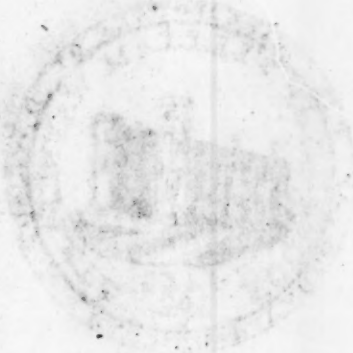

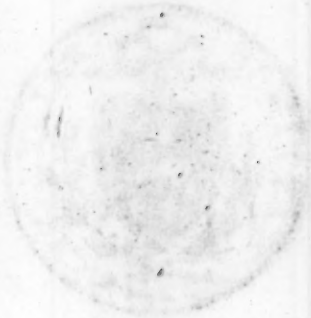
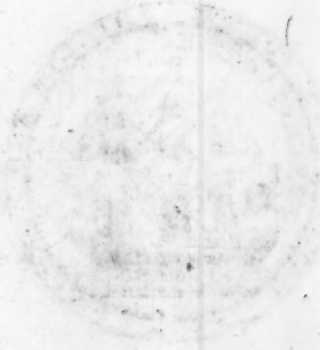

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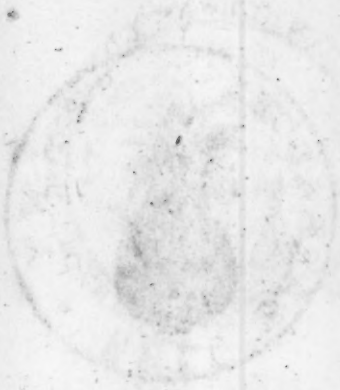

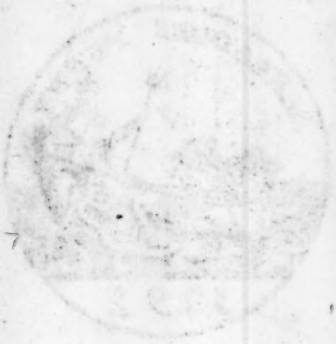

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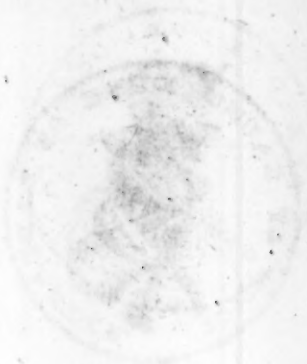

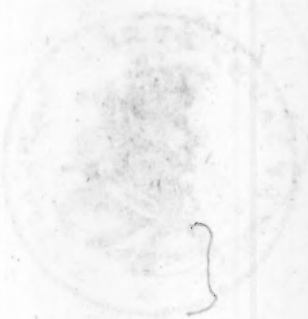

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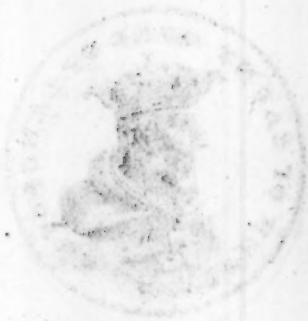

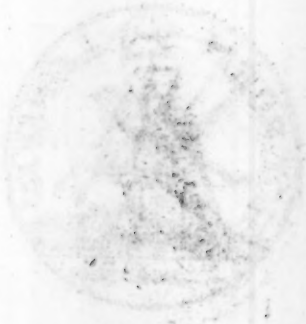

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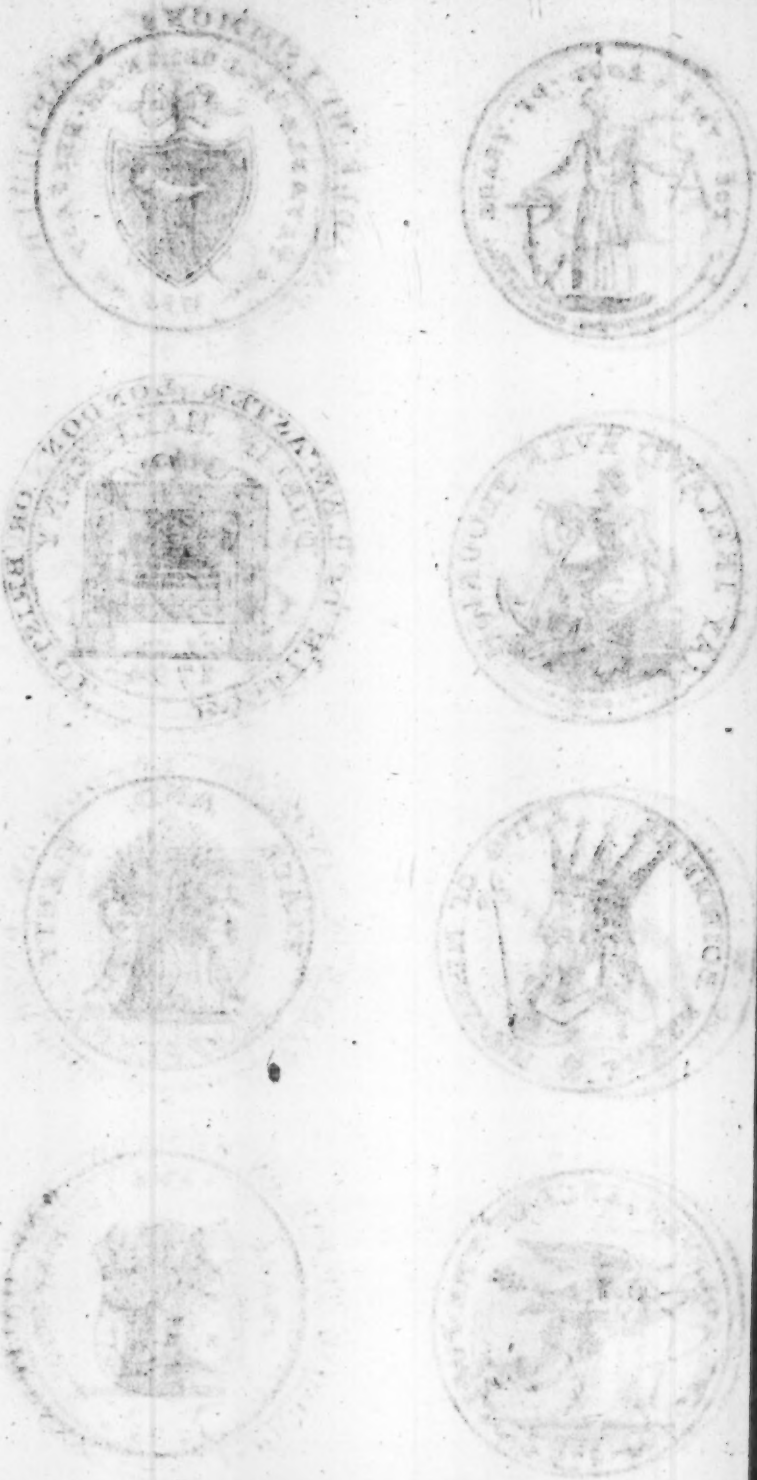

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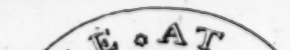

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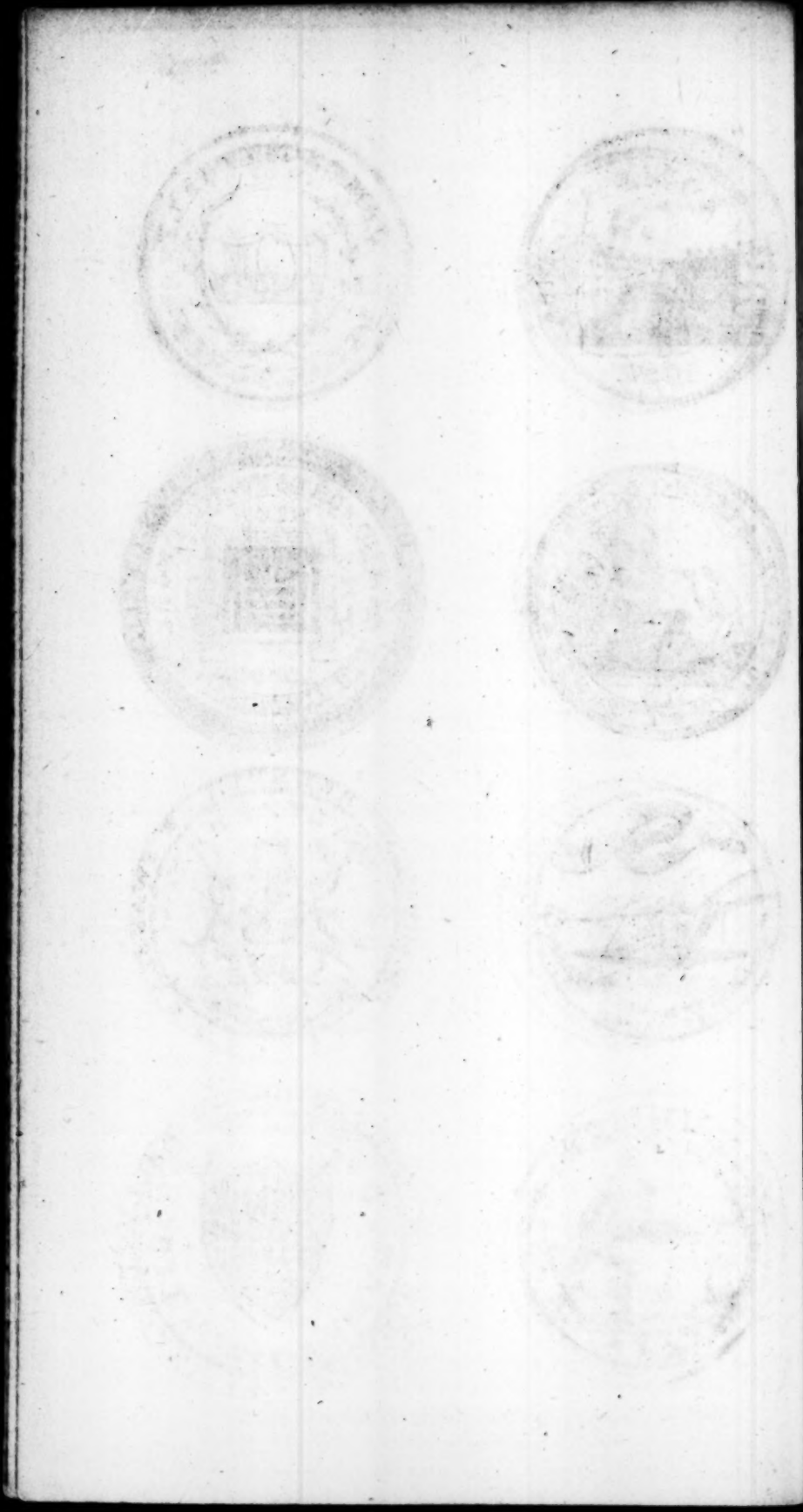

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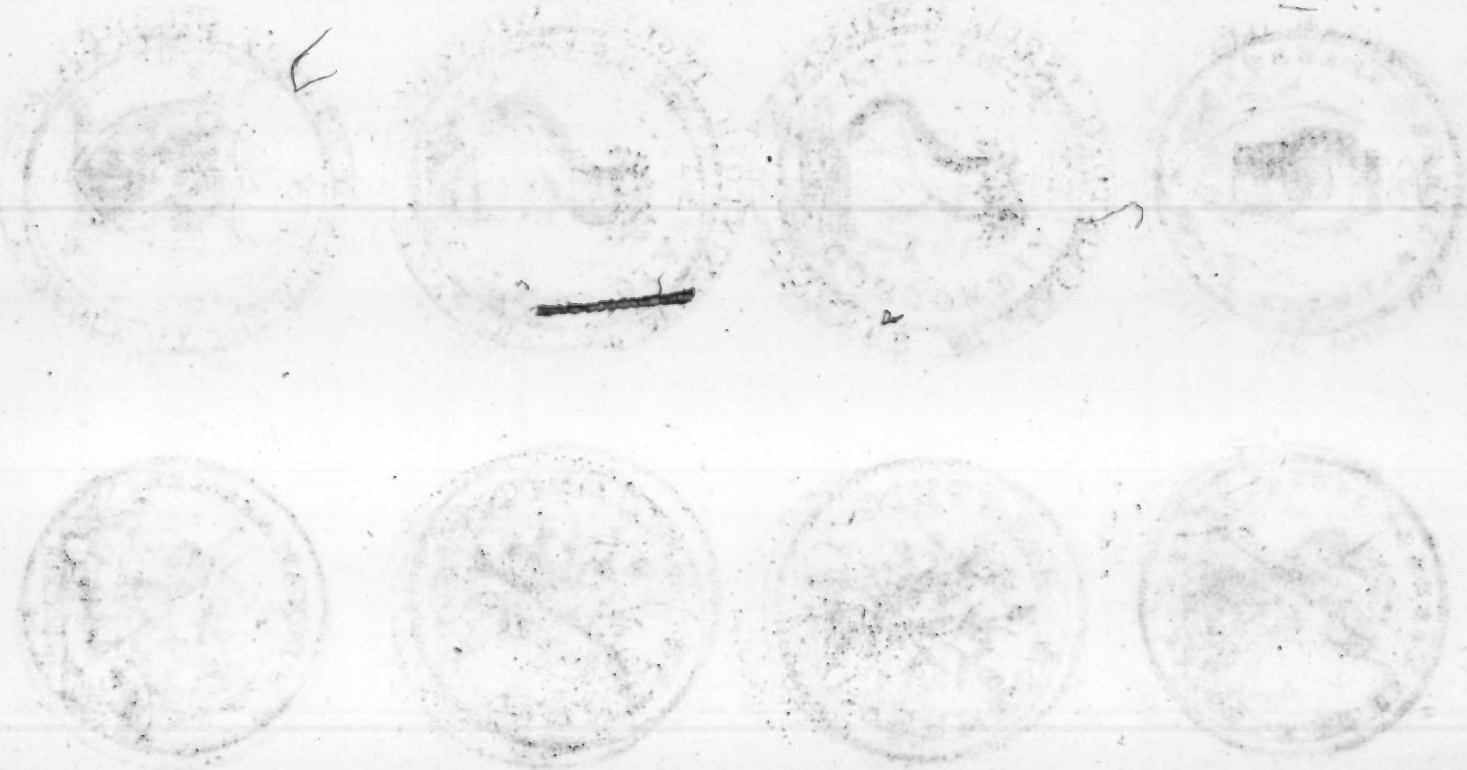

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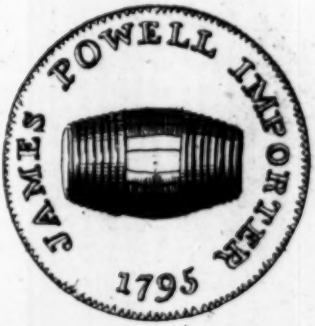

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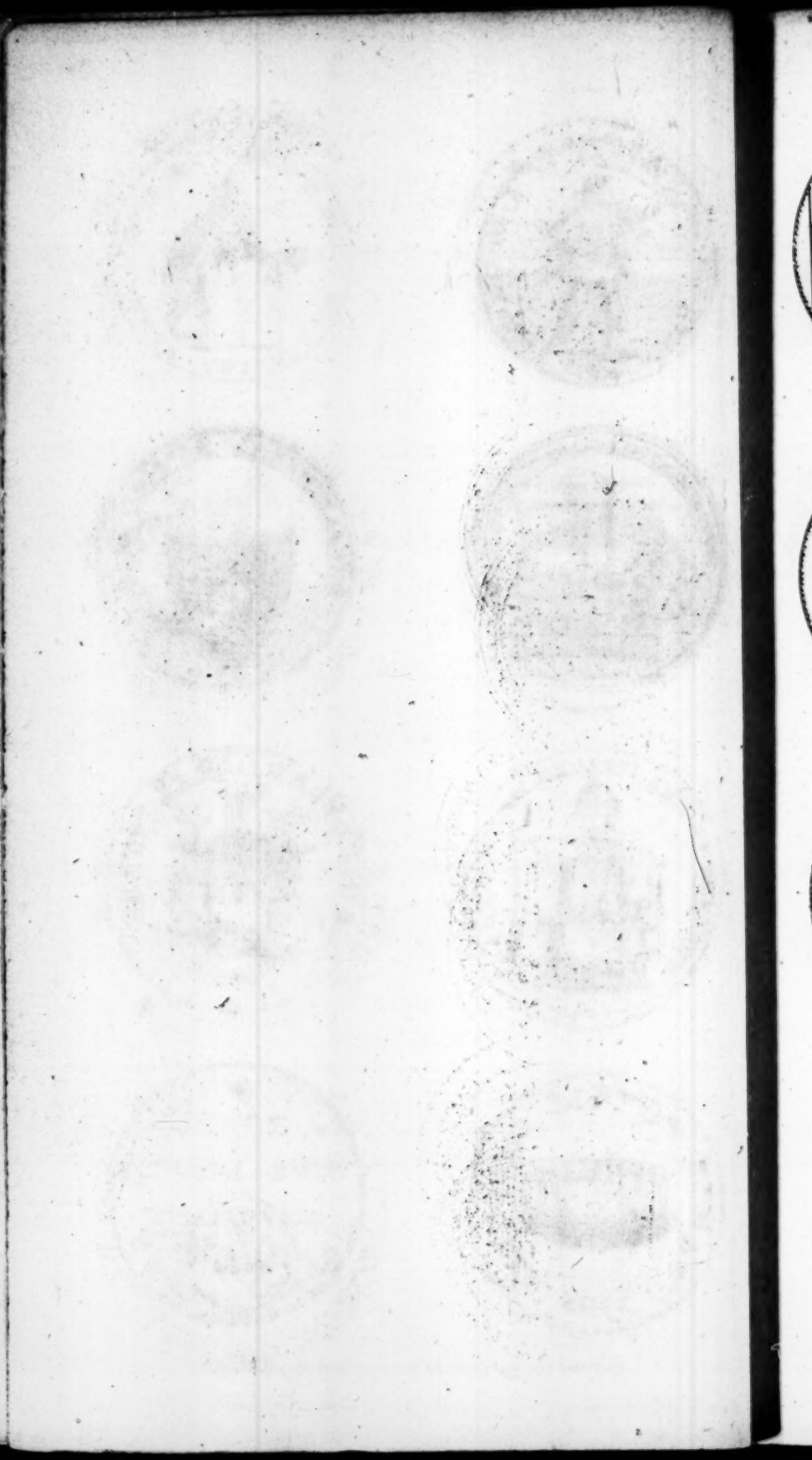

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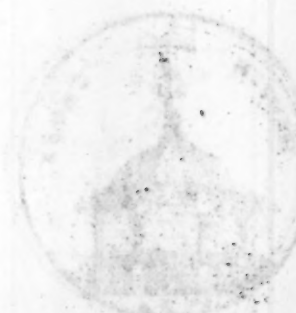

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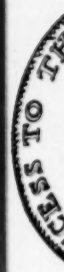
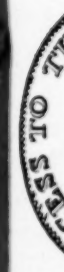

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